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Survive Winter Wisely

...for those who have seen more winters than they may care to remember.

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Ready for another winter?

Older Americans have seen many severe winters and perhaps have suffered because of them. This needn't happen again if you spend a few moments *now* to get ready for the impending cold weather. Each year your body becomes more sensitive to winter's outbursts, but steps can be taken in the home to avoid potential trouble spots. Action taken now will allow you more comfort later and save you money as well. Get ready to weather this winter.

Your Home—Keep It Insulated, and Take Safety Precautions

- A well-insulated home is also a key to winter comfort. Have a friend or relative help caulk and weatherstrip windows and doors for added protection. Your local agency on aging may also provide assistance.

- Storm windows and attic insulation are a guard against severe winter weather and high heating bills. They will help conserve energy and reduce air leaks. One crack can be expensive.

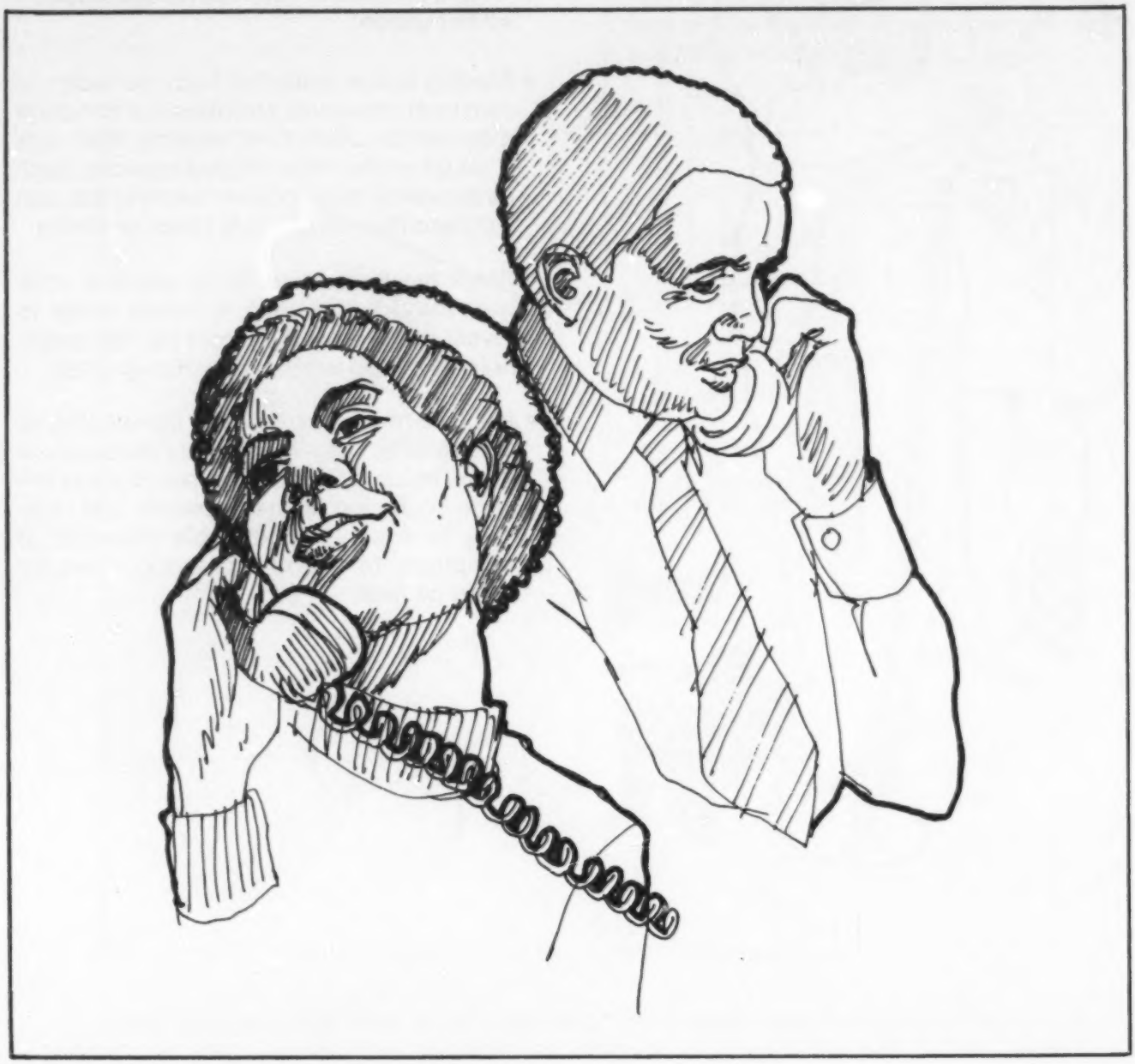
- Furnaces should be regularly checked for adequate fuel supply and efficiency. To supplement your regular unit, install a space heater or wood stove in a room where you spend a lot of time. *This is one place where it pays to use a professional for installation and maintenance.*

- Keep clothing and other combustibles away from space heaters and wood stoves. It doesn't take long for old newspapers to catch on fire and destroy your home.

- Everyone is feeling the economic pinch, but don't do foolish things to stay warm. *Opening your stove or sleeping with a still-burning fire can have serious consequences.*

Your Peace of Mind

- Alert neighbors and friends are a valuable asset to an older person. Staying in touch provides security in a particularly bad storm, and there may be occasions when they need help, too.



Pace Your Outdoor Activity

- *If you must go outdoors and exert yourself in the cold weather, pace your activity.* If possible, ask a friend or neighbor to help with any heavy work, such as shoveling the driveway.

- Keep a thermos of warm beverage close by while outside.

- Staying active helps the body generate its own heat. However, overexertion can pose a serious problem. Cold weather itself puts a strain on the heart. Added exercise, such as shoveling snow or even walking fast, can increase the risk of heart attack or stroke.

- Since the body loses three-quarters of its heat through the head, it makes sense to invest in a wool hat. A wool hat can easily help you keep warm, even during sleep.

- Hypothermia is particularly threatening to older adults. The internal body temperature drops below 95° and a person can experience confusion, slurred speech, stiff muscles, or even uncontrollable shivering. If symptoms of hypothermia occur, results could be fatal.

Take Care Of Your Health

- Don't neglect yourself. Eating and dressing properly can provide natural warmth. Well-balanced meals help the body produce its own heat, and several thin layers of clothing provide increased protection.
- A nonperishable food supply with high energy content (peanut butter or raisins) and an ample amount of drinking water should be kept on hand.
- Be sure you have adequate medical supplies for the longer winter months ahead. Check with your doctor to see which medications might interfere with your body's temperature control and take your temperature regularly. On a really cold day, you might not be as warm as you think.

These are just a few hints to help you begin your winter watch wisely. Remember, it pays to plan ahead, especially if the winter months are troublesome for you. Winter can be a pleasant season if you're prepared for most emergencies.